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11 SEPTEMBER 2001

OCT 16 2001

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Tuesday 11 September, the evening of the terrorist attacks in the USA, Brother Roger spoke this prayer in the church in Taizé:

Holy Spirit, we pray for the entire human family and for those who are touched to the depths of their being by the grave events of this day. You know our desire that all may find a consolation. You enable those who are disconcerted by violence, by the incomprehensible suffering of the innocent, to be bearers of peace. Jesus Christ, inner Light, enable us to welcome your love.

Then the cross was placed in the center of the church, as on Friday evenings. And, in solidarity with the victims, the brothers of the community and all the young people in Taizé prayed around the cross.

Two brothers left for the United States in late September, and led a prayer for peace on 28 September in the Church of Saint Mark's in The Bowery, close to the site of the tragedy in the south of Manhattan.

Letter from Taizé

October - November 2001 Bimonthly 3.50 FF 5



THE SUMMER IN TAIZÉ

Young People Ready to Hope

The summer months saw three to six thousand young adults arrive each week in Taizé, coming from as many as eighty different countries.

What did they discover? What did they take away with them? In the end, all we can do is trust: each person certainly received something, perhaps just a few words, but who can say how those words will take shape in the concrete reality of their lives? The essential is invisible and can often scarcely be expressed in words. Who can measure the fruits of the prayers, the times the participants spent in silence, in meeting and in enjoying themselves too, since those who celebrate in the evening are the same persons who earlier were praying in silence in the church?

Seeing all the young people who come to share their questions, their sufferings and their joys with the brothers in the church after evening prayer, one can sense that the road forward lies open, that something great and beautiful is being prepared.

A Hope Is Sown

At the end of his stay on the hill, a

friend expressed what he sensed in the young people he had encountered:

"What are they looking for by praising God, praying, sharing with so many others? They find the keys to an inner life. They may also find the possibility of building bridges between the Gospel that they are attached to or that they are discovering, according to the situation, and the world in which they live, which they often fear and which they are more or less familiar with. They find a clear link between simplicity and the truth they are searching for.

"The simpler we are, the closer we are to the Gospel and the more intense is our longing. The closer we come to simplicity, the more we see roads open towards something so immense it is called infinity. Many are beginning to discover or to glimpse this. On this road of simplicity that heads toward infinity, there is a feeling of freedom and a feeling of joy. Whatever happens concerning the adventure of God's Word in them, that feeling of joy and freedom will remain. In some it will bear fruit

quickly, in others more slowly, but all will have been touched. A seed of hope has been sown in them and no one knows how it will blossom, but it has been abundantly sown in those who are ready and willing to hope."

Eighty Different Nationalities

In July there was the usual increase in the number of participants, going from 2500 the first week to close to 5000 the last week and to 6000 in August. Little by little, all the countries of Europe were represented; up to 300 Lithuanians and 200 Romanians were present each week. During the two summer months, Taizé hosted 10000 Germans, over 4000 Italians, 4000 Poles, almost 1000 Russians, Albanians, people from all the Balkan countries, etc.

Each week young people from Korea were present: small groups, individuals, and two larger groups, one Catholic and the other Presbyterian. There were also groups of Chinese from Hong Kong and Taiwan as well as from mainland China, groups of Indians, and Latin Americans from different countries.

"If you want to succeed to build a true world order, you cannot forget Africa! Let yourselves become African!" With these words, the Africans welcomed participants to the forum they led each week. From July to October, the African face of Taizé came alive. Close to 350 young Africans from some twenty different countries, from Algeria to South Africa, from Kenya to Senegal, succeeded one another on the hill. The scholarship students from Algeria came for two or three weeks; others were invited for three months and took an active part as group-leaders and in the work teams. Bishop Alphonse Georger, of Oran, the successor of Bishop Claverie who was assassinated, stopped in Taizé. "In Algeria we are only a tiny handful of Christians," he explained, "but we try to be the face of Christ and to serve the people among whom we live."

Almost every week the whole summer long, a group of young people arrived with their bishop. Cardinal Georg Sterzinsky, the archbishop of Berlin, spent three days in Taizé during a week when 200 Berliners were present. A dozen Anglican and Lutheran bishops were brought by young people from their diocese; they came from Britain, the United States, Australia and Canada. Among them were two women: the Anglican bishop of Edmonton, Canada and the Lutheran bishop of Hamar, Norway. Catholic bishops from Austria, Italy, Croatia and the United States also visited Taizé this summer, as

well as the vicar general of Skhoeder in Albania. The nuncio from Romania came for a weekend, and discovered Romanians in Taizé who represented the whole gamut of the different Christian churches in that country: Orthodox, Hungarian-speaking Latin-rite Catholics, Greek-rite Catholics, Reformed Christians, Lutherans.... Father Johan Bonny, from the Council for Unity in Rome, came as the representative of Cardinal Kasper. And Cardinal Billé, the archbishop of Lyon, president of the French Bishops' Conference, took part in the prayer one evening and spoke to those present on the topic of hope. Father Hilarion Alfeyev, from the Orthodox Patriarchate of Moscow, and a good number of other Orthodox priests from Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia also visited the hill of Taizé.

From Taizé to Budapest

Throughout the summer, young Hungarians spoke about their country and their expectations for the stage in the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" that will be held in Budapest from December 28-31. Every day, at the end of the afternoon, workshops were held on various subjects that reflected the diversity of those present. Some of these groups already dealt with themes that will be taken up during the preparation and the meeting in Budapest. Among them were: Volunteer service—making the earth a better place to live for all. How can we recognize God's call? What kind of Europe do we want to build? "Eyes to see": an hour with several works of art. How can we create a prayer at home using the songs of Taizé? How to start reading the Bible? Loving our enemies. An experience of welcoming the homeless and excluded—what can we discover by living with the poorest? Icons, a window on the mystery of God. World debt and fair trade.

The presence during the month of August of Pal Solt, president of the Supreme Court of Hungary, and Jean-Claude Mallet, a French expert on international relations, contributed to the quality of the reflection in the workshops devoted to peace, globalization and the building of Europe.

An article in the next issue of the *Letter from Taizé* will give an outline of this reflection, showing that, among the concerns of the young, one of the main questions is that of peace. The urgent need for peace is at the root of the desire to build a united Europe, not just economically, financially and commercially,

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Taizé

2001/02
28 December - 1 January
BUDAPEST

For several weeks now, brothers of the community, sisters of Saint Andrew and young people from different countries have been in Budapest. They have begun to visit many parishes and groups in the Hungarian capital, in order to pray together, explain the meaning of the meeting at the end of December, support those who are getting ready to welcome participants, and reflect together with them on how to make it possible to offer hospitality to everybody.

Many young people in Budapest are looking beyond the material preparations to what is really at stake in the meeting. Kati writes, "I have many friends who do not go to church and who feel distant from it. When they were children, the Church was less visible than now. Today, in our country, it is present in daily life, in school, in the media. Now people can express their faith freely, and there is a visible structure. But for many this does not mean much. One of the greatest challenges for us is to help people discover that the Church is a place of communion, a home for all. I hope that the meeting will help my friends to see another face of the Church, to see communities able to welcome and to listen."

During the months of preparation for the meeting, a regular prayer is being held every day at noon in a church in the city centre. Every evening, prayers will take place in the different districts of Budapest and in the surrounding towns. Young people and families preparing to offer hospitality will come together at that time. Orsi wrote about her parish:

"How many people can we welcome? If I think about the size of our apartment, it is not so big, with three rooms for our three children and us. When we welcome others, we want to give the best we can, but we do not have a spare bed. So what can we do?"

"I remember a previous meeting that I took part in a few years ago. We were staying with two elderly women. They opened their door with a smile, and we found a way of communicating even though we did not speak the same language. There was no bathroom in their flat, just cold water in the kitchen. We slept on the floor in our sleeping bags, but nothing was lacking. We found a

Budapest: Communities able to Welcome and to Listen



When we open our home to someone, we greet them with the words Isten hozott, which means literally "God has brought you here." It is so good that these two words remind us how God is constantly with us, and also that each person is a gift to us from God. And when someone leaves, we say Isten veled, "God is with you," don't be afraid, trust.

(Anna from Budapest)

way to share our lives, at breakfast and when we returned in the evening around a cup of tea. The simplicity and the warmth of their welcome told us a lot about the Gospel and the true meaning of hospitality.

"So when I think about it, I find that our apartment is large enough for people to sleep on the floor, and I can prepare a simple breakfast. The important thing will be to share with our guests. And for our children it will be something new and much more important than all sorts of Christmas distractions!"

From December 28, 2001 to January 1, 2002, tens of thousands of young adults from all the countries of Europe and other parts of the world will arrive in Hungary to be welcomed by families and local church communities of Budapest. This new stage of the pilgrimage of trust on earth will be the 24th young adult European meeting prepared by Taizé.

Budapest, which straddles the Dan-

ube, is a symbol of the bridges which are possible between East and West. Our meeting will express our desire to achieve communion and a sharing of gifts without delay between people who have very different languages and cultures. We shall pray as a vast community together in the city-centre and, in the mornings, meet in various neighbourhood in smaller groups.

There will be a preparation in each country and region not just to organize the trip, but also to share the commitments and the searching of those who will travel together.

What Is the Budapest Meeting About?

- Taking part in the meeting involves seeking reconciliation on all levels-in the whole human family as well as among those around us in our daily life.
- Being welcomed by families and parishes in Budapest will help us discover that peace and trust are possible among people who are very different.
- We shall pray as a vast community together in the city-centre: times to rediscover a spirit of praise and also to listen to God.
- In the neighbourhoods where we stay, we shall encounter people whose commitments for others stimulate us in what we undertake at home.

Practical Details

Arrival: Friday morning, 28th December 2001 between 7am and 12 noon.

Departure: Tuesday afternoon (after 4 pm), 1st January 2002

Accommodation: either with families or in school and church halls. It is essential to bring a camping mat, sleeping bag and warm clothes.

General programme for 17-29 year olds: Participants will be welcomed by families and local church communities throughout the city and surrounding region. Morning prayer each day will be in one of the churches of the neighbourhood where you are staying. Then meetings in small groups with other participants and with local people. Midday and evening there will be two common prayers for all participants of the meeting together. In the afternoon, workshops on various themes. There is also the possibility to spend the five days of the meeting in silence (separate accommodation).

Helpers/Choir (option open only to young adults between the ages of 17 and 29): Those who would like to help, as group-leaders in parishes or team-leaders for practical tasks, or in the choir group, should, if possible, arrive on Wednesday 26th December, between 8am and 3pm (arrival not possible on 27th December). Some of these teams will also be open to participants who arrive on 28th December.

16 year olds may come to the meeting only if accompanied by an adult over 20, with each adult accompanying no more than six 16 year olds. Arrival: 28th December - not before.

Adults over 30: the European Meeting is intended for young adults under 30, however a few adults over this age can also come, in particular if they are leading groups of young adults. We ask older adults (over 45) to consider sponsoring a young person to come from a church, chaplaincy or school in their area, instead of coming themselves. Adults over 30 all participate in the main group, arriving on 28th Dec. (not before). If you cannot accept the same simple accommodation conditions as the young people and need a "real bed" please indicate this when you register.

Families with children, and people with a disability who need special accommodation should contact Taizé—best by telephone in October or November—to arrange this.

Contribution to costs The level of contribution for young people from Ireland and Britain will be approx. €55 (£35 - £40) for the whole meeting. As well as the hire of meeting-halls and equipment, this covers all meals and a public transport pass.

Travel: From London, coaches depart 7:15 am, 27th December; Cost: £120 return (£100 if booked and paid by 31st October); Contact: "Skyliners", Flaval House, Caldwell Road, NUNEATON, CV11 4NB. Tel: (02476) 325682/328410; Freephone: (0500) 481111; Fax: (02476) 354626; email: taizebookings@skyliners.co.uk

From other countries: Contact Taizé to learn of groups being arranged by air and by coach.

Register by 1st December. For information and to register:

Budapest Meeting
Taizé Community, 71250 TAIZÉ, France.
Fax: (+33) 385.50.30.16;
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Email: meetings@taize.fr
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How can there be a covenant between two partners as unequal as God and human beings?

In the Scriptures, the covenant is above all a promise and a gift of God. We use the word "covenant" to translate the Hebrew word *b'rit*. But *b'rit* does not mean a symmetrical relationship between two partners who commit themselves by a contract. The Jewish scholars who made the first translations of the Bible translated the Hebrew word by the Greek expression *diathêkê*, which means "disposition, arrangement." The covenant is thus the disposition by which God institutes an order of salvation. That is why it is sometimes said that the covenant is not made or established, but given. God says, "I shall grant a covenant between myself and you" (Gen 17,2).

This character of gift and promise is very clear in the covenant with Abraham (Gen 15 & 17). God makes the commitment to give Abraham a land, to make of him a great people and a blessing for all the nations. Abraham is pure receptivity; all he does is trust. "He put his faith in the Lord and this was reckoned to him as uprightness" (Gen 15,6).

When creation itself is described in terms of a covenant—God speaks of "my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night" (Jer 33,20)—it is evident that this covenant stands for the order which God has established in the universe. After the flood, God makes an "eternal covenant" with all living creatures (Gen 9,16). This covenant does not depend upon their agreeing with it; God is the one who takes the responsibility for assuring and guaranteeing being and life to all of creation.

God takes the initiative of arranging things according to his good pleasure. By making a covenant, however, God creates a partner. The conclusion of the Sinai covenant (Ex 19–24) emphasizes strongly the need for the human partners to consent to what God proposes. While creatures other than human beings observe instinctively the immutable laws established by God in nature (Ps 148,6), God gives his Law to human beings in the form of words to be followed consciously and willingly. God expects from them a free response, so that by choosing to live according to God's arrangement, they might have "happiness and long life on earth" (Deut 4,40).

On Mount Sinai, the Israelites accept God's offer: "All that the Lord has said we shall do and we shall obey" (Ex 24,7). Although the covenant began as a unilateral disposition, now it becomes a relationship. But the reciprocity of the promise does not make the covenant relationship completely symmetrical. Since God cannot lie, he will keep his promise. But what about the faithfulness of the human partner?

What happens to the covenant when the human partner is unfaithful?

Beginning in the wilderness of Sinai, the story of the covenant takes a dramatic turn. The episode of the golden calf that Israel makes as its God is only the first act of a long drama. The human partner and beneficiary of the covenant is "a stiff-necked people" (Ex 32,9). Often God complains, "They have betrayed me" (Hosea 6,7); "My people have abandoned and forgotten me" (Jer 2,13.32). God is deeply hurt by this abandonment, because he had put his entire heart into the covenant. He suffers from his "jealousy," in other words from his passion to keep alive, come what may, the communion between himself and the people he loves dearly.

In making a covenant, God exposed himself to the hazards of human reactions. He did not want to control people like a puppet-master. But his decision to show them the way by the words of his Law involves a risk: the commandments are the opposite of constraint. The words "You will love the Lord your God with your whole heart, your whole soul and your whole strength" (Deut 6,5) may seem to be a command. But in reality they are a request. God is saying in effect, "Love me!" Nothing makes us more vulnerable than asking for love. By loving, God puts himself into the power of those he loves.

The persistent deafness of the nation to God's words of love opens up the possibility of a fatal outcome of the drama of the covenant. What if God were to lose patience? "To me, my heritage has behaved like a lion in the forest, it roared at me ferociously, so now I hate it" (Jer 12,8). The prophets saw the possibility of a radical failure of the history of salvation inaugurated by the Sinai covenant. But even when betrayed and ignored, God cannot forget his people. "How could I abandon you, how could I give you up, Israel? (...) My heart within me is overwhelmed; fever grips my inmost being" (Hosea 11,8). Yes, God can do everything, but he never goes to the point of saying, "It's all over; nothing more can be done."

For God remains himself. "Before the mountains were born, before the earth and the world came to birth, from eternity to eternity you are God" (Ps 90,2). From his infinite resources, he draws forth what is new and does unexpected things. "The Lord has appeared to me from afar: I have loved you with an everlasting love" (Jer 31,3). Communion remains beyond the sin and refusal of human beings. God restores it by establishing a "new covenant": "I will put my Law in the depths of their being and write it on their hearts. (...) I will forgive their sin" (Jer 31,31-34). Written on my heart, the words of the covenant will never be foreign but always my own. God gives us the faithfulness he asks for. "I will give you a new heart, (...) I will put my Spirit in you" (Ez 36,26-27). This Spirit in us is the Spirit of Jesus, "mediator of a new covenant" (Heb 12,24) by the gift of his life.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

4 SUN Lk 19:1-10 Jesus said: The Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost.

5 Mon Mk 1:1-15 Jesus said: The kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news of the Gospel.

6 Tue Lk 1:57-79 At John the Baptist's birth, Zechariah said: Blessed be God, who allows us to serve him without fear.

7 Wed 1 Jn 3:14-20 Let us not love just with words and in speech, but with actions and in truth.

8 Thu Ps 145 All look to you in hope, O God. And with generous hand, you satisfy every living creature.

9 Fri Mk 1:1-8 John the Baptist said: After me will come one more powerful than I. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.

10 Sat Hab 2:1-4 I shall stay awake, watching to see what God will say to me. And the Lord answered me saying, "The just will live by their faithfulness."

2 Fri Ps 34 The Lord is near to the broken-hearted. He saves those whose spirit is crushed.

3 Sat 2 Co 4:7-12 We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

11 SUN Lk 20:37-38 Jesus said: God is not a God of the dead but of the living; for him all people are alive.

12 Mon Ps 4 Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. You have set me free from my distress.

13 Tue 1 S 12:20-24 Adore only God; serve the Lord faithfully with all your heart, bear in mind the great things God has done.

14 Wed 1 Jn 5:14-15 John writes: We are confident that if we ask God for anything and it is in accordance with his will, he will hear us.

15 Thu Ex 3:1-15 Moses said to God, "If I tell the people: 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you', and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am; thus you shall say to them, 'I am' has sent me to you."

16 Fri Mt 21:28-31 Jesus said: A father said to his two sons, "Go and work in the vineyard today." The first replied, "I will not," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The second replied, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will? Those listening said, "The first."

17 Sat Is 42:1-7 The Lord says to his servant: I have called you in righteousness. I will take you by the hand and shape you. I will make you a light to the nations.

18 SUN Lk 21:5-19 Jesus said to his disciples: You will be persecuted because of my name. But make up your mind not to worry about how to defend yourselves, for I shall give you words and wisdom.

19 Mon Ps 147 Give praise to the Lord! It is good to sing praises to the one who heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

20 Tue Ps 46 God is our refuge and strength, and an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be in turmoil.

21 Wed Mt 5:38-48 Jesus said: Love your enemies and pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

22 Thu Lk 12:32-34 Jesus said: Give to those in need. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure that will not fail, in heaven where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

23 Fri 2 Co 5:13-17 Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for them.

24 Sat 2 Co 1:3-11 Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

25 SUN Lk 23:33-46 The criminal crucified next to Jesus, said to him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

26 Mon Ws 1:1-3 Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

27 Tue Mt 11:28-30 Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

28 Wed 1 Co 13:1-13 Love is patient and kind. Love does not seek its own advantage, it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.

29 Thu Heb 12:1-2 Since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection.

30 Fri Ps 19 St Andrew The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

2 SUN ADVENT
Jesus said to his disciples: Stand ready, because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

9 SUN John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

16 SUN Jesus said of John the Baptist: He is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you to prepare your way.

23 SUN An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

30 SUN Paul writes: May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one Body.

3 Mon In you, Lord, is the source of life; in your light we see light.

10 Mon The Lord says: Look, I am doing something new, even now it is emerging, do you not see it? Yes, I am making a way in the desert and my people will sing my praises.

17 Mon James writes: Humbly accept the word planted in you, which can give you life.

24 Mon Blessed be the Lord, for he has visited and redeemed his people, and established for us a power of salvation, as he said through his holy prophets of long ago.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

4 Tue The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

11 Tue God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through him.

18 Tue Those who hope in God shall renew their strength. They shall run and not grow weary; they shall walk and not be tired.

25 Tue CHRISTMAS
The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has shined. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. And this will be his name: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

5 Wed Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

12 Wed If you do away with the accusing finger and malicious talk, if you give what is yours for the hungry, then your light will rise in the darkness and your darkest hour will be like the middle of the day.

19 Wed Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

26 Wed St STEPHEN
The Word was in the world and, though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. But to all who accepted him he gave the power to become children of God.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

6 Thu Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life... Your Father in heaven knows what you need. Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself.

13 Thu We proclaim Christ crucified, which to the nations is foolishness, but to those whom God has called it is Christ, the strength and the wisdom of God.

20 Thu If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we are in communion with one another.

27 Thu St JOHN
In the beginning was the Word. In him was life, and that life was the light of all people.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

7 Fri James writes: Let no one say when they are tempted, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.

14 Fri Peter writes: Cast all your anxiety on God, because God cares for you.

21 Fri The darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. Whoever loves their neighbour remains in the light.

28 Fri God says: I will go before you and will level the mountains so that you may know that I am the Lord, the one who calls you by name.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

8 Sat The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

15 Sat This is what we have heard from Christ: God is light, in him there is no darkness at all.

22 Sat Jesus said: The greatest among you will be your servant.

29 Sat Peter said: I now really understand that God has no favourites, but that in every nation he loves those who revere him and act justly.

31 Mon Jesus said: It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

1 Sat Whoever loves their brother or sister lives in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling.

DECEMBER

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

In the following text Saint Gregory the Great, who lived at a crossroads of history, the fall of the Roman empire, emphasizes an unexpected aspect of the story of the disciples of Emmaus. They do not recognize Christ but, considering him to be a stranger, they ask him to stay with them, and then the discouragement that had taken hold of them finds an outlet.

The Lord opened to the pilgrims of Emmaus the mysteries of Scripture that concerned him, and yet, since he was still far from being believed in as God in their hearts, he pretended he was going to continue on his way. His outer conduct corresponded to their inner opinion. Christ wanted to test them to see whether they, who did not love him as God, could nevertheless love him as a stranger. And they compelled him to remain. The Gospel says "compelled." It tells us that we should not just offer hospitality to strangers; but oblige them to receive it.

They set the table, offer the food, and then they recognize in the breaking of the bread the God whom they did not recognize when the Holy Scriptures were explained. In listening to the precepts of God, they do not see the light. By fulfilling them, they are illuminated. For Scripture says that it is not those who listen to the Law who are justified in God's eyes, but rather those who put it into practice. Whoever wants to understand what he has heard must immediately put into practice what he has already been able to grasp. So the Lord is not recognized when he speaks, but he condescends to be recognized when he is fed.

So love, my dear brothers and sisters, and practice hospitality. Love the works of charity. Receive Christ at your table so that he can receive you at the eternal banquet. Offer hospitality to Christ the pilgrim, so that on the day of judgment he does not consider you as foreign pilgrims, but receives you into the Kingdom as members of his family.

- What invitation am I ready to put into practice without waiting?
- How can we exercise hospitality better?

"There is no greater love than to give one's life for those one loves" (John 15,13).

Just before his passion and resurrection, Christ sums up the meaning of his entire life in these few words: to give his life out of love.

Wherever we may be on our journey, perhaps this hope fills us too: can I make love the priority of my life, a project that matters more than anything else and that can inspire my choices and acts in all the areas of my existence?

When this kind of hope is urgently felt, it can worry us. Does it have any meaning? Would it not be better to limit it? This longing comes from so deep within me that I could imagine that I am its origin and the only one responsible for it. But this would be too narrow an outlook. This longing passes through me. I am the bearer, but it comes from somewhere else, and it will only find its full meaning in the encounter with someone Other than myself, someone who offers me a communion.

Christ understands this thirst within me; he knows its strength. He knows that it can disturb me, make me aware of my poverty, of my inability to give it meaning and fulfillment. But he opens a road on which it can come to full flowering, when I understand that I myself am not the source of love, just as I am not the source of joy, of peace or of forgiveness.

- When have I discovered that I am filled with a longing that is beyond me?
- How have I found support in the searching of other persons? For whom can my own searching help to shed light on the way?

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

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but also politically, socially and humanly. But is Europe bringing a message of hope and solidarity to other nations, or will it appear as a threat or as a closed space? This article will also deal with the question of "globalization," a word that is a bit frightening, as if this concept had all of a sudden crystallized people's worries as well as their hopes. How can we not be aware of the confrontation between globalization and the universality to which the Gospel calls us?

Giving Our Lives

Each week in the summer months, one of the afternoon workshops was en-

titled "How can I recognize how God is calling me?" This question is present in the hearts of a great many young people. Some of them found support for their searching when they return home by being present for the entry of three new brothers into the community and, at the end of the summer, for the life-commitment of a brother.

On one Saturday evening, Brother Roger said about this topic, "Whoever tries to give their life in a vocation for their entire lifetime often asks God 'What do you want from me?'"

"God is not visible. Neither is the Holy Spirit visible. And yet by means of his Spirit, God is always present. The Spirit enables us to follow Christ. By his constant presence in each one of us, the Holy Spirit allows us to understand the meaning of our existence. And what is

that meaning? It consists in giving our life because of Christ. Even when at times we have the impression that his presence disappears from our life, the Holy Spirit repeats to each one of us: don't be afraid, I will always be in communion with you."

Brazil

The Meeting in Salvador (Bahia)

A meeting of young people was held in the city of Salvador (Bahia) from September 6-9. It was organized by the Taizé brothers who have been living for many years in Brazil, in a poor district of the city of Alagoinhas. One of the brothers explains:

The meeting was held in an exhibition park 20 km. from the city center. This park belongs to the ministry of agriculture and the space is generally used for exhibitions of animals. It is a large park with trees, lawns, and huge covered spaces. The main meeting-place measures 4200 square metres. It is entirely covered, but without walls.

It was the first time that this park was ever used for a church meeting. It was given to us at no cost, but without electricity because of the rationing. We therefore had to hire generators for light and sound, which was rather expensive. In addition, we had to organize transportation by bus. The day before the meeting, as a result of telephone calls by the cardinal, the Salvador city administration and the prefect of the State of Bahia put thirty-six buses at our disposal. We hired another forty-two.

Unfortunately, some of the buses given to us did not come, especially in the poorest districts of the city, so that the young people from those districts, who had prepared the meeting with a great deal of enthusiasm, could not be there for the first day. We hired additional buses to solve this problem, and so Saturday and Sunday everything worked well.

The opening of the meeting on Thursday evening coincided with the beginning of a long weekend, and so there was a huge traffic jam especially on the side of the city where the park is located. Naturally, the arrival of our eighty buses added to this! It took the cardinal over an hour and a half to make a trip which usually takes twenty minutes. He arrived as the evening prayer was ending, just in time to speak a word of welcome to all those present.

About 7000 young people were present, in other words three times more than the other meetings we have organized in different places in Brazil over the last few years. The number increased during the meeting itself, with two hundred participants registering on Saturday alone.

From the very beginning the young people participated well in the prayers; many of them came early to sit up front close to the brothers and the choir. The sound system lent by the city was good, so that the singing of the choir could be heard everywhere, and this helped to create a good quality of singing in the entire assembly.

Saturday was a holiday; September 7 is independence day in Brazil. In the

morning, the participants took part in the "cry of the excluded" in the city, a demonstration organized by the Church throughout the country, just after the official parades.

Friday and Saturday afternoons, the young people were at the park and could choose among ten workshops: Liturgy and sacred art; African culture in the Church (over 80% of those present for the meeting were black or mixed-race); Being Christian in politics (with a young auxiliary bishop from São Paulo and a deputy from Alagoinhas); Being Christian in the university (with three professors from the universities of Salvador); Prayer; Choosing our road in life; Catholics and Protestants; The moral teaching of the Church for the young; Being bearers of peace in a violent society; How to read the Bible (with a monk, a minister and a religious sister). The workshops on prayer, African culture and the Church's moral teaching had the largest number of participants.

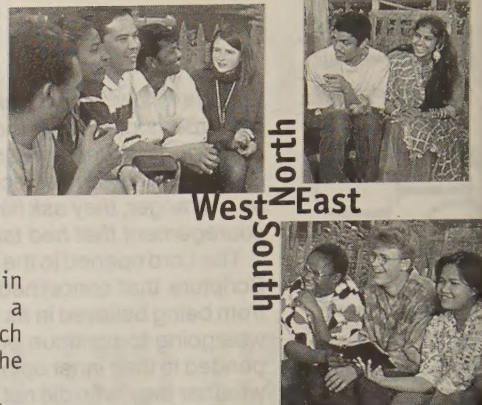
The prayer around the cross was the highlight of Friday evening. On Saturday evening, the prayer of light was very beautiful and recollected. Many people also took part in the shorter times of prayer in the early afternoons.

Saturday morning, visits to different districts of Salvador showed many a surprising poverty and even great misery, which forms such a strong contrast with the beauty of the rich section of the city. Many young people from our own district in Alagoinhas, which is quite poor itself, said afterwards that they had never imagined that there could be such poverty in Salvador.

Sunday morning, everyone took part in Eucharistic celebrations in the parishes. Then there was an ecumenical prayer in the park, led by a bishop together with several ministers and priests. It was a simple, joyful and profound hour, with the distribution of blessed bread to all present. As the young people were leaving, a boy came to say goodbye and told me, "At the end of the previous meeting in Campina Grande, you told me not to create a Taizé group, but rather to take part in what already exists in my parish. That impressed me and so I made contact with a group of young people there. And now I have brought these young people from my parish to Salvador."

Brother Roger sent this message for the meeting in Salvador:

"My brothers and I, with young people from many countries here in Taizé, are



praying in communion with you. What is the most essential thing we can wish each other? To search in order to discover what God wants from each one of us. What God wants is that we live in a humble trust in him and in a great simplicity of heart and of life.

"God is not visible, but he is always present at the center of the human soul. Even if our faith is weak, God remains present. He invites us to leave our worries and our doubts behind. He enables us to seek the hope he has for the lives of each one of us. Even in our inner struggles, God wants happiness for us. And there is happiness in the humble gift of oneself.

"Together we can say this prayer: God of all mercy, you love and you search for each one of us, even before we loved you. And so we are deeply astonished to discover that you look upon every human being with infinite tenderness and deep compassion."

Letter from Taizé

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